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Caesar and the Present

By ROBERT V. CRAM

The University of Minnesota

The following suggestions are for those teachers who believe that students beyond the first year of Latin should read the actual words of ancient writers of recognized literary merit. Experience has proved that students who have mastered the first year of Latin are able to read the ordinary narration of Caesar.¹

Many years ago a teacher of Latin in a large city high school said before a group of her compeers, "Caesar was a bloody, cruel tyrant. I hate him and I cannot make my students like him." A teacher so prejudiced against a writer cannot make her students like him.

I have recently had opportunity to teach Caesar again after a lapse of several years. I was more than ever impressed by a fact that had struck me on former occasions, namely, what a very interesting and, in many ways, contemporary figure Caesar is. A class in Caesar should be informed at the outset that they are to read some of the actual words of one of the world's greatest generals and statesmen. He laid the foundations of modern Belgium, Switzerland, and France, and gives us the first information we have about the inhabitants of these countries, of the Germans, and of the British Isles.

In connection with World War No. 1, Book II was of special interest, because the campaigns described there covered some of the territory and famous battlefields of that war. It is still probably the best for the teacher who wishes to read any book in its entirety; nevertheless I submit that military history and the military science of antiquity are not very exciting reading, especially for high-school students.

I would urge that the teacher start with the very beginning of Caesar and cover the first twenty-nine chapters of Book I which deal with the campaign against the Helvetii. They are for the most part easy and contain some strikingly modern parallels.² In the second chapter we find the familiar idea of 'Lebensraum' (room to live in). These ancestors of the Swiss want to migrate, because the geographical limitations of their country "restricted their movements and made it comparatively difficult for them to attack their neighbors; and being a warlike people they chafed under this restraint. Moreover, considering their numbers and their renown as valiant warriors, they felt that their territories were too small."³ In chapter 5 occurs the first example in history of the 'scorched earth policy,' its purpose, however, being the reverse of its present use. As soon as the Helvetii thought they were ready for their migration they set fire to all their strongholds, villages, and other buildings, and "burned the whole of their grain except what they were going to take with

them, that they might have no hope of returning home and so be more ready to face every danger."

The Helvetii asked Caesar's permission to pass through the northeast corner of the Roman province of Transalpine Gaul near Geneva en route to a new location north of Bordeaux, and were refused. They then started to force their way through the territory of the Sequani and Aedui—a region over which the Romans had no jurisdiction, beyond the fact that the "Aedui had repeatedly been called brothers and kinsmen by the Senate" (I 33). When Caesar was informed of their intention (I 10), "He saw that, if this happened, it would be very dangerous to the Province to have a warlike population, hostile to the Roman people, close to its rich and defenceless corn-fields." Here one may discuss with a class the immediate causes of the present war, that is, the expansion of the Germans and the menace caused thereby to the Allied Nations.

Finally, chapter 29 conveys the curious information that tablets were found in the Helvetian camp which contained in Greek letters "the names of individuals, the number of emigrants capable of bearing arms, and likewise, under separate heads, the numbers of old men, women, and children." It is a noteworthy fact that early, semi-civilized inhabitants of Europe kept such modern statistics and used the Greek alphabet. The teacher has a good opportunity to digress on the origin of our own alphabet from that of the Romans, who in turn derived theirs from the Greeks of southern Italy.⁴

In chapter 11 of Book VI Caesar says: "At the stage which this narrative has reached, it will not, I think, be irrelevant to describe the manners and customs of the Gauls and the Germans, and the points wherein the two peoples differ one from the other." Chapters 13 to 20 which deal with the manners and customs of the Gauls, chapters 21 to 23 which deal with the manners and customs of the Germans, and chapters 24 to 28 which describe the great Hercynian Forest and three strange species of game⁵ that inhabit it, are passages of obvious significance.

We learn in chapter 13 that throughout Gaul the entire government and administration of justice was in the hands of all-powerful priests known as Druids. Their highly effective punishment was excommunication.

(This ecclesiastical penalty, in use in the old Synagogue, was resorted to by St. Paul, and has been exercised by the Church ever since.)

Very instructive is the Druids' course of training (chapter 14) which may last as long as twenty years, and the fact that the doctrines of the Druids are handed down by word of mouth. Caesar gives the following explanation of this custom. "Their motive, I take it, is twofold; they are unwilling to allow their doctrine to become common property, or their disciples to trust to documents and neglect to cultivate their memories,

for most people find that, *if they rely upon documents, they become less diligent in study and their memory is weakened.*⁵ One easily thinks of modern parallels such as the handing down of ballads and negro spirituals by word of mouth.

In chapter 19 is mentioned a practical form of life insurance, and in chapter 20 a striking solution to a serious problem which is always contemporary. The more enlightened tribes "have a legal enactment to the effect that if any one hears any political rumor or intelligence from the neighboring peoples, he is to inform the magistrate and not communicate it to any one else, as *experience has often proved that headstrong persons who know nothing of affairs, are often alarmed by false reports* (italics mine) and impelled to commit crimes and embark on momentous enterprises."

In chapter 9 there is a pathetic reference to the violent anti-German feeling among the Romans where the Ubii "earnestly begged Caesar to spare them, and not to make the innocent suffer for the guilty through indiscriminate animosity against the Germans (*communio odio Germanorum*)."

Especial noteworthy, therefore, are the remarks of such a prejudiced source as Caesar, in the three chapters devoted to these tribes, that "the Germans are not an agricultural people, that no one has any private property in land, that they live principally upon milk, cheese, and meat, that they honor continence, and above all hospitality." "To ill-treat a guest is regarded as a crime: those who visit them, from whatever motive, they shield from injury and regard their persons as sacred; every man's house is open to them, and they are welcomed at meals." We also learn that "their lives are passed entirely in hunting and warlike pursuits"; that "the greatest distinction which a tribe can have is to be surrounded by as wide a belt as possible of waste and desert land"; and "that no one should settle in their vicinity."

If still more reading material in Caesar is desired, I should recommend the account of the first and second expeditions to Britain (Book IV, chapters 20 to 36 and Book V, chapters 8 to 23), especially chapters 12, 13, and 14 of Book V, which deal with the geography of the British Isles and with the manners and customs of the ancient Britons.

The passages from Caesar so far suggested should, I think, furnish enough material from that author, and the class should be ready for *selections* from Cicero rather than the hackneyed Catilinarian orations. In this connection the teacher should read Mrs. Hudson's inspiring article on "Character Building through the Medium of Latin Literature."

In another paper I intend to discuss in detail what is by far the most significant part of Caesar's narrative, chapters 31 to 47 of Book I, where we have the beginning of the problem of Alsace that has been so vexatious in modern times.

¹ I would not include in this the famous building of the bridge over the Rhine nor much indirect discourse.

² Chapters 18 to 20 with their account of the ambitions of Dumnorix and his anti-Roman agitation might well be omitted.

³ All translations are from T. Rice Holmes: *Caesar's Commentaries on the Gallic War Translated into English*; 1908. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

⁴ A valuable book in this connection is by Professor B. L. Ullman, *Ancient Writing and Its Influence*. Longmans, Green and Co., New York, 1932.

⁵ For instance, the 'so-called elks' which have jointless legs. "They do not lie down or sleep; and if by any chance they are knocked down, they cannot stand up again, or even raise themselves. Their resting places are trees, against which they lean, and thus rest in a partially recumbent position." VI. 27.

⁶ Italics mine. This sound pedagogical principle should appeal to the older readers of this article.

(To be continued)

The Classical Literatures and Concomitant Thought Trends (II)¹

By WILLIAM CHARLES KORFMACHER

St. Louis University

First of all, then, it is well to reorient our minds as to the *political milieu* in which the classical literatures were composed. In these days of spacious national boundaries and of an international strife embracing thousands of square miles of territory and keeping under arms millions of trained troops, to the accompaniment of mechanisms of destruction staggering in their cost and deadly in their effectiveness, such a re-orientation is doubly necessary. The very term 'nation,' which to us implies a grandiose sweep of lands and a grouping of inhabitants often widely diversified in racial stocks, is far different in its application to the *patria* or *patris* of old. For while we look upon a 'city' as but an incidental constituent in the agglomeration of widely flung parts that compose a 'country,' to the ancients the 'city'—and one city only—*was* the nation. To the Greek, Athens or Thebes or Sparta, each with a circumscribed surrounding territory, was his own native land; it represented to him the full orbit of his national life as amply as the broad extent of the United States does for us in America. When the Athenian thought of Sparta, he thought of it as a distinct and sovereign nation—closer, it is true, than an Egypt or a Persia through the accident of topographical proximity and racial kinship—but yet in many respects distinct, disparate, disjointed. To the early Roman, his 'state' was the City of Rome and its slight adjoining territory in Latium.

Even so distinguished a political theorist as the philosopher Plato conceives nationhood only as cityhood, and the ideal state in his *Republic* is no more than a utopianized Greek city. Hence, both in theory and in practice, Greeks and Romans dealt with the state on a scale so much reduced by our standards as necessarily to render diminutive, by comparison, all national functions—civil administration, military and naval equipment, public finance, population, and all the various other aspects of nationhood which with us have attained a degree of hugeness and complexity almost beyond control.

Thus it is that when scholars rightly point to the international-mindedness of the tragedian Euripides and contrast it with the rather strictly nationalistic spirit of his great associates in the triad, Aeschylus and Sophocles, they mean not so much a reaching-out on his part for sympathetic understanding with non-Greek peoples, like the Scythians or the Egyptians or the struggling Roman Republic to the West, as rather a grasping for a common appreciation and concord

among the several sovereign states of the Hellenic peoples. Hence, too, scholars properly detect a new note in the celebrated 'praises of Italy' in the second book of Vergil's *Georgics* (136-176), a passage climaxed with the inspired apostrophe:

Salve, magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus,
magna virum . . .

and they see here a shifting of emphasis and a cutting away from old prejudices—an attempt on the part of the poet to think of the entire peninsula, rather than the city alone, as the due object of patriotic veneration, and a desire to make Italy and the complexus of tribes it embraced, rather than Rome, the recipient of national allegiance.

A further point to be kept in mind as one reviews the thought trends of the classical peoples in their political economy is the fact of the largeness and exclusiveness of import with which the state loomed before them. It is not too much to say that to them the state was the supreme reality, the be-all and end-all of human existence, the one entity deserving the deepest devotion, the most selfless service, the most lasting loyalty, from all its citizens. At a time when men were inclined either to relegate Divinity to a state of aloofness from human affairs or even to doubt the existence of some higher power beyond the ken of the senses and of any existence beyond this mundane life, it is hardly to be wondered at that they centered upon the state that finality and exclusiveness of attention so prevalently clear in their writings. The amazing thing is that such polio-centric devotion did not everywhere eventuate in a state totalitarianism such as obtained at Sparta. At Athens it could exist side by side with a freedom and even license of speech caustically critical of state functions and state functionaries (as in the comedies of Aristophanes). At Rome it could tolerate the development of a republican form of government with a large measure of freedom and of approaches to equality among the classes.

So exaggerated a view of the prominence of the state had its effect in manifold ways. We may see its influence in the belief and practice, originally held both at Athens and at Rome, that the armed forces of a nation were necessarily a citizen army, a militia, serving for the duration of an emergency only and then going back to their civilian status. Athens in its great days knew no professional military class; and even after its loss of independence in Alexandrine times, it appears never to have been reconciled to the idea. The professional soldier was thought of as a swashbuckling military adventurer, hardly more than a plundering brigand who had been fortunate enough to secure a soldier's status as a mask for his depredations. Such is the 'boastful captain' of Hellenistic comedy, seen in Pyrgopolynices of Plautus's *Miles Gloriosus* and in the Thraso of Terence's *Eunuchus*.

Clearly, too, it is this same conviction of the pre-eminence of the state as the supreme human entity which lends point to Cicero's inquiry in the *De Officiis* (1. 69-72) whether a man may licitly withdraw himself from the duties of public life in favor of a scholarly retirement; and which lends added intelligibility to the noble passage in the *Somnium Scipionis* (13) at which

the younger Scipio, caught up in a dream to the Milky Way, encounters the shade of the elder Africanus, and is encouraged to a life of public service with the assured promise that such a life is the certain road to an immortality amid the stars:

Sed quo sis, Africane, alacrior ad tutandam rem publicam, sic habeto: omnibus, qui patriam conservaverint, adiuverint, auxerint, certum esse in caelo definitum locum, ubi beati aevio sempiterno fruuntur. Nihil est enim illi principi deo, qui omnem mundum regit, quod quidem in terris fiat, acceptius quam concilia coetusque hominum iure sociati, quae civitates appellantur. Harum rectores et conservatores hinc profecti huc revertuntur.

¹ For the author's introductory paper, see THE CLASSICAL BULLETIN, December 1942, p. 18.

(To be continued)

Translation—A Bane

One of our aims in teaching Latin and Greek is to enable our pupils to come into direct contact with some of the greatest minds of all time. We are convinced that translations, no matter how perfect, are not adequate. Hence, our endeavor must be to enable our pupils to get the meaning of Caesar, Cicero, Vergil, Horace, Plato, without the intermediary of English, in other words, to read Latin as Latin, Greek as Greek. Yet, does not our persistent insistence on translation—in prelection, recitation, examination—inhibit this immediate flashing of the sense from the page to the mind? Do we not ineradicably drill into their thinking processes the sequence of Latin symbol—English equivalent—meaning, so that they cannot understand a sentence or page of the Latin or Greek author, until they have first translated it into English? They are, then, getting the meaning not from the Latin or Greek words they read, but from the English equivalents they put in their place. Correctly speaking, they are not reading, they are decoding symbols. They should be thinking in Latin or Greek: they are thinking in English. Their reading of Latin or Greek is a bilingual process, at its best, slow, laborious, circuitous. As the English equivalents come to mind, they must be rearranged to make sense. Would not such pupils come into fuller and more intimate contact with these authors by reading them in a good translation than thus in their own imperfect one, the while their minds are hampered and confused by the bilingual process? Is it at all possible for such pupils to sense the finer shades of thought, the nicer vibrations of emotion, conveyed by the order of words, the cadence of cola and commata? And if such is the result of our insistence on translation, are not the means a frustration of the end?

Milford Novitiate

A. M. ZAMARA, S.J.

"A Portrait of Vergil"—how welcome that is! "The Respects of the Roman People" is invaluable. I intend to read it to my Spanish classes, for I see in these Latins the same "Respects." They have been highbatted by the "Gringos" through several generations, and are in desperate need of being led to a sober appreciation of their own culture.—Sister Agnes de Sales, The Catholic Teachers College of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

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Editorial

Humanism is the Janus of education. The old Greek Humanism, formulated and refined by Plato and Aristotle, showed one face of this double-headed divinity, the face that looked toward the heights. Its educational ideal was designed to shatter the idol of the Sophistic by striving to realize ideal humanity—humanity at its ripest, best, and fullest. 'Man, and nothing below Man' was its slogan, or, more positively, 'The Whole Man.' This concept gave due recognition to the ascendancy in Man of spirit over matter.

But the Greeks did more than that; for just because they envisioned the whole Man, they recognized in him a 'religious' strain. Engrossed as they were in Man's natural beauty and his zest for living, they yet regarded him as dependent upon, and bounden to, the Deity. It is their religious ideas—though some of them were sadly distorted—that gave shape and substance to their literature and were woven into their daily life. What would be left of Homer, Hesiod, the lyric poets, the tragedians, if *Θεός* were expunged from their vocabulary? Sophocles' high canticle of Man's surpassing excellence (*οὐδὲν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον*) ends on a note of recognition of a higher Power. The Ionian physicists left no room for God in their theories of the universe; yet Thales reminds us that "the world is full of gods"; Empedocles implies their existence in his *Purifications*; Anaxagoras posits a supreme, independent Intelligence. Plato took refuge in astral theology. Aristotle postulates a Prime Mover. Individual 'atheists' there have been among the Greeks: an organized atheistic movement there could not be. This all-pervasive belief in a Being *above* Man is one of the brightest lights in Greek civilization.¹

But the old educational ideal of Humanism has had a long and checkered journey from its birth among the Greeks to our own day.

When the fullness of time arrived, the more enlightened Fathers of the Church, while combatting the crudities of intellectual and moral paganism which vitiated the classics, were able to take a dispassionate

view of ancient culture. They took over and assimilated whatever was good and ideal in it. To them the classics were the logical forerunners of Christian Humanism. The trait common to both was the fact that they saw life steadily and saw it *whole*. "The essential characteristic of Christian Humanism, as contrasted with materialistic and pseudo-scientific Humanism, and as allied with the highest and most spiritual types of non-Christian Humanism, may fairly be said to be its *wholeness*."² Nor should it be forgotten that it was the monastic orders in the 'Dark Ages' that preserved the ancient heritage. When the Renaissance burst upon the modern world, there were those, indeed, that were misled by its glamor; but its most authentic interpreters clung to the full, inclusive version of Humanism; they not only admired ancient culture but were also in hearty accord with its religious bent. They reconciled the classics with the Gospel and Christian culture.³

More recent times have, unfortunately, witnessed a return to the old Sophistic. There are educators, great and small, in our midst who profess inability to see in Man anything that points upward. Their name is legion. Their version of Humanism is summed up in the slogan 'Man, and nothing *above* Man.' It is the other face of Janus. Its look is downward.

Through the classics we can help a topsy-turvy world to meet the supreme need of the hour. "The human creature," says Jacques Maritain, "*must* be respected in its very connection with God . . . After the great disillusionment of 'anthropocentric' Humanism and the atrocious experience of the antihumanism of our day, *what the world needs* is a new Humanism, a 'theocentric' or *integral* Humanism, which would consider Man in *all* his grandeur and weakness."⁴ Norman Foerster lays down the first aim of 'an advanced discipline in letters' in the following terms: "To encourage a common intellectual life among students of letters, in which the discipline of letters will be *integrated* with the other *humanistic* disciplines—history, the fine arts, philosophy, and *religion*."⁵ (Italics ours)

As for the Greeks, who combatted the Sophistic, for the Fathers of the Church and the leaders of the Renaissance, who combatted a pagan view of life, so for us at this late day—the only salvation, the only invincible Palladium, is the old and genuine type of Humanism, launched by the Greeks and refined by Christianity.

¹ See the entire paragraph (p. 173) in Walter Miller's *Greece and the Greeks* (Macmillan; 1941). In its origin the Greek religion may have been nature-worship; but "behind natural phenomena there was obviously a divine world."

² John LaFarge, S.J., in *Thought*; September, 1942; p. 435.

³ See Douglas Bush, *The Renaissance and English Humanism*; The University of Toronto Press, 1939.

⁴ See *Fortune*; April, 1942; p. 168.

⁵ *Literary Scholarship: Its Aims and Methods*; Chapel Hill. The University of North Carolina Press; 1941, p. 20.

We are still going strong in the classics here at St. Ignatius, keeping up the long and honorable tradition. We have over six hundred boys out of a possible seven-hundred-and-ten taking Latin and close to one hundred taking Greek. Not bad for these unclassical times!—C. A. Burns, S.J., St. Ignatius High School, Cleveland, Ohio.

The Appeal of Homer¹

BY THOMAS J. M. BURKE, S.J.
Shadowbrook, Lenox, Massachusetts

If like Rupert Brooke I were to write a poem on the things I have loved, or if I confined myself to the writers I like, Homer would be high on the list. There is Cervantes with the humor and pathos of his story of Don Quixote and droll Sancho Panza—the funniest and saddest story in the world; there is Sophocles with his dynamic Oedipus Tyrannus; there is Milton with the ringing organ harmony of Paradise Lost, the utter purity of the Comus, the splendor of Lycidas; there is Tennyson with the color and heroic story of the Idylls of the King. The Grecian bard certainly has the rough vigor and homeliness of Masfield, those little honest touches that make the story and the characters so real, so recognizable. And Homer has the freshness, the wonder, the insight, of Chesterton.

This last quality is the one I like best in Homer. His outlook on life seems so fresh and youthful. Life hasn't lost for him all the warmth and glow of boyhood. He can sing of heroes and the rattle of arms, of love and tears with all the starry-eyed wonder of a child. Chesterton said that before you can see a thing as beautiful, you have to see it as strange. It was a way that he seems to have been gifted to see things. This is the gift which makes really all of Chesterton's writings poetic, this gift of wonder and true vision, and it is the quality that pervades and vivifies every line of Homer. Carlyle says in his little book on Heroes and Hero Worship, that the great poet is the man who has the gift of seeing the real beauty of everything in the world about him, in nature and in men, in all creatures, that beauty which is in reality the godlike quality in them, the trace and stamp of the divine. This is the quality most dominantly present in children, this keen sympathetic reaction to the heavenly, the godlike, in everything. Newman tells us that as a man he went back along the dirt road that led to the school of his youth and tried to understand what had made that road appealing to him as a boy. Now it seemed just a dusty, brown road, but when as a boy he walked along that road he said that it had a soft springiness to it, a sort of beckoning mood as though it would surely lead on to adventure, it seemed new and vital. But as we grow older our mental vision is dulled: the trifles and the important events of life seem to lose their zest and sparkle. This world will never starve for want of wonders but for want of wonder, and the great poet helps to keep alive and revivify our wonder, because he makes us realize that even the little ordinary things are strange, thrilling, that they are beautiful, tinted with the godlike. I think that this is Homer's greatest gift. I think it is the one responsible for all his charm, for his success in every detail of his writing. It is the one most deeply appealing to me.

This vision, this youthful wonder of the poet enables us, looking at life through his eyes, to see the world, not shabby and dull and colorless, but still fresh and crisp. It is this vision which makes Homer's imagina-

tion so sparkling, so vivid, so swift, so iridescent, and for us, so refreshing and delightful. He can recapture for us the terror that clutched Hector's little boy at the waving of the war plume in his father's helmet, the exultation of a noble heart as Diomedes roars into battle, the pride of a boy in his father as Telemachus hears of the deeds of Odysseus, and Homer can catch the quiet beauty of *κροκόπεπλος*, 'crocus-robed' dawn. That is a phrase I love to muse upon. Of the several ways in which crocus can be taken, I prefer to take it literally as meaning the autumn crocus, which is a purple flower with bright golden stamens. You can just see one of those dawns when the east is covered with purpled clouds shot through with sunrise fire. But, indeed, there are so many fine imaginative pictures in Homer: the wine-colored surge of ocean, the flash of Achilles' famous shield, the Grecian walls tumbling as the walls of a sand castle that boys build on the seashore, the old men sitting on the walls of Troy seemingly no more than the voices of grasshoppers, Achilles in his lordly anger dashing the sceptre to the ground. Most of Homer's writing is so full of imaginative details that it reminds me of one of those old illuminated manuscripts of medieval times, but it is an imagination that is possible because of his fresh, childlike vision.

It is that same poetic insight that gives us the depth and fulness of emotion, the ideal appeal. The tragedy of the Iliad rings in our ears like the piercing strains of Tchaikovsky's *Symphonie Pathétique*. If you read the Iliad through and see it as a unit you realize the stirring tragedy, the tragedy of Achilles whose defect seems to have been that he was too fully a Grecian hero. You feel the burning of his love for Patroclus, his dearest friend, who falls at the hands of Hector. You can feel the surging anguish and grief of a great soul. But tragedy stalks through the whole of the Iliad. You meet it in countless little scenes. One takes place in the lofty city of Troy when Hector says good-by forever to his wife and child; his wife is tearful, his baby son shrinks from his tall father in battle armor with the waving plume. Hector kisses his little boy; he strides off to battle, off to death. There is another moving scene after the death of Hector. Achilles has taken Hector's body back to the Grecian camp, saying in his anger, that he will dishonor it in every way possible. Old Priam is brokenhearted at the death of his son. To regain his body is Priam's only desire. He will go to the very slayer Achilles and entreat for the lifeless body. In the midnight silence he steals from Troy, laden with treasure for ransom, slips stealthily through the lines of the Greeks, comes to the tent of Achilles. In he steps. The brooding, grim Achilles sits there. Down on his knees falls the white-haired Priam. He grasps the sinewy hand of Achilles, the hand that killed his son, and with all his father's heart kisses that hand as he begs for the body of his dead boy. Achilles yields to his prayer, has the body of Hector cleaned and covered with a precious robe, and then Achilles himself lifts it up and gives it back to Priam.

When we swing to the Odyssey we listen to a story that is told with all the zest and vigor of a boy. Here is Homer—the storyteller at his best as he sings of

Odysseus' 10 years of wanderings from the time that he leaves Troy until he returns to his home in Ithaca where waits for him faithful Penelope, his wife, and his son, hardy Telemachus. Through a land of adventure and fancy we travel with Odysseus. We meet the Cicones in Thrace, we walk the land of the Lotus Eaters, and we see Odysseus in the cave of the Cyclops, Polyphemus, we share with him his adventures with the wind god Aeolus, with the Laestrygonians, and the enchantress Circe, down into Hades we go with him to talk with the dead; the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, the island of the sun god, Calypso's isle, the building of his raft, the raging storm at sea, shipwreck on the shore of the land of the Phaeacians, charming ingenuous Nausicaa, the return in disguise to Ithaca, the recognition of his master by the old dog Argus, who, too feeble to rise, wags his tail in greeting, then dies, the slaying of the suitors who besieged his wife, Penelope, the final peace—all these make the Odyssey one of the most interesting and beguiling stories you could read.

Another quality I like is the rhythm evident throughout Homer's epics. If you want to feel the pulsing of the Iliad or the Odyssey read them aloud. After all they were meant to be sung by bards. Homer has varied his rhythm in every possible way. Now it is swift, now rolling like long, slow breakers on the shore, now choppy as the whitecap sea, now surging like the storm-beat waves. Now light and clear as the singing of a bard, now solemn with the accents of serious debate, now stately with regal speech, now heavy and rough with the rush and muffled roar of battle, now simple and quiet as the starlight sky. And through it all there flows color, the color of life, the brilliance of the heroic, the glare of battle, the rainbow of mysterious lands. The similes shed their warmth and glow through the moving picture of Homer's stories. And color and rhythm are always present. You feel and see them in every scene. They beat and flash so that Homer's song is quick with life.

Homer sings not only of great action but he sings of great characters. Here again insight, vision is very prominent. Every character is individual, living. There is nothing staid or dull about any of Homer's characters. They are fresh, they are varied. They range from fiery, impulsive, lordly Achilles to patient, wily Odysseus, from sage old Nestor to naive, timorous Nausicaa, from noble Priam to the swineherd Eumaeus, from appealing Hector to boasting Alcinous. I wish I could delay on them longer for they certainly are one of the most appealing features in the epics. I always like to meet interesting people, and Homer has given me a wealth of opportunities.

But there are so many features in the epics that delight me that it would take all morning to touch upon them even lightly. There are the similes, the combination of realism and idealism in Homer, the dramatic portrayal of character, the closely welded, lively dialogues, the battle scenes, the romantic element, the skilful pattern of the Iliad and the Odyssey, the ideals that he teaches, the colorful, unbroken flow of

both stories, the great-hearted sympathy with every type of men that Homer shows.

¹ [This introductory speech was delivered by the author, as chairman, on the occasion of the Public Exposition of Homeric Poetry by F. A. Sullivan, S.J., Shadowbrook, December 14, 1941. Ed. Note]

The Latin Consolatio as a Literary Type. By Sister Mary Edmond Fern, A.B., A.M., Ph.D. (Sisters of Loreto: Webster Groves, Mo.) 1941; ix + 230. \$2.00, paper; \$2.75, cloth.

The purpose of *The Latin Consolatio* is "to make a survey of all the consolatory literature still extant in classical Latin from the time of Cicero to the time of Statius, the representative writer of this genre in Silver Latin; to examine the consolatory nature of each selection; to inquire wherein each conforms to the ancient *consolatio*, and thus to seek to establish, from a study of the matter presented, the general characteristics which may warrant the conclusion that the Latin *consolatio* is a literary type" (viii).

The historical Introduction notes that the consolatory treatise of the Academician Crantor (330-268 B.C.) became "a sort of public fountain where antiquity went without ceasing to seek comfort in its sorrow" (p. 5). We are told (p. 7) that the *consolatio* belonged to no particular school, and that each philosopher followed the teachings of his own school in his arguments of consolation.

The body of this work discusses at length apposite sections from ancient authors whose writings have a bearing on consolation. The following imposing list shows the extent of literature covered: Consolatory Letters of Cicero; Other Consolatory Writings of Cicero; Consolatory Writings of Pliny the Younger; Consolatory Letters of Seneca; Formal Consolations of Seneca; Consolations of Poetry (Lucretius, Horace, Catullus, Propertius, Ovid); Epicedia of Statius; Elegies of Martial and Other Elegies; Convergent Types; Sepulchral Inscriptions; the Lamentatio. As a result of all this labor, the author defines the *consolatio* as follows:

The Latin *consolatio*, written sometimes in prose, sometimes in poetry, is a genre of Greek origin, which has for its object the assuagement of grief or the alleviation of some kind of distress; and since it occupies a place apart from other literature, by reason of its subject matter, and follows, for the most part, conventions in form, it may be considered a literary type (p. 204).

Modern studies in English and French appear often in the footnotes, but the dissertation undeniably represents independent consideration of the works of antiquity. Disagreement may well be expressed on several points. Some passages discussed may appear to be beyond the pale of strictly consolatory literature unless a point be strained. Allowance must of course be made for personal preferences in delimiting a subject that is somewhat open to narrower or wider interpretation.

A few errors have been noted. Germanicus, the husband of Agrippina, is referred to as 'her son' (p. 70). Here and there the translation in the text does not tally with the Latin cited in the notes. The few misprints we have noticed are unimportant (except the puzzling *non for nos*, p. 99, note 8).

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The General Structure of the Oedipus Tyrannus

By EDWARD J. MESSEMER, S.J.

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In studying the general structure of a play, it is well, first of all, to discover the turning point of the dramatic action.¹ With regard to the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, F. M. Connell finds it in the 'unmistakable misgivings of Oedipus in lines 726-770.'² G. Freytag is a little more definite, though apparently in perfect agreement, and calls Oedipus' words, "O woman, how at your words a sudden terror seizes me," the highest point of action.³

That this line is clearly a turning point within the action of the play cannot be denied. Thus far Oedipus has been on the offensive, as it were, searching and charging others with the murder of Laius. Here, with due motivation, he suddenly changes. He recalls his encounter at the fork in the road and, from the circumstances of place (733), time (736), and the description of Laius (740) together with the number of his attendants (752), he becomes morally certain that he is the murderer of Laius. He has but one last hope, one line to cling to, before his guilt is incontrovertible—Jocasta had said λησται (716) and he had been alone. Hereafter Oedipus is completely on the defensive. His one hope is to prove his innocence. That this is a turning point in the attitude of the protagonist, then, seems rather obvious. But is it the turning point of the dramatic action?⁴ Is all that precedes rising action, and all that follows falling action, so that this may correctly be termed 'the highest point'? At first glance, such a structure seems all so neat. This is Aristotle's model play; so what could be more fitting than to have the turning point so near to its mathematical center?

But then a difficulty arises, for what sort of a 'rise' has the *Tyrannus* up to this scene? Is it a rise in interest, a rise in fortunes, or a rise in spirit?

Certainly there is a rise in interest. The only difficulty here is that it does not cease with line 726. Our interest grows more and more intense till almost the closing lines of the play. Is there a rise in fortunes? It seems improbable, for how does Creon make Oedipus more prosperous, or how does Teiresias, with his charge of guilt, or Jocasta, with her terrifying tale? Does not the very opposite seem true? But this is a psychological drama, the study of a man's soul, and perhaps it is a rise in 'spirit.' One wonders, for who could dream that either Creon or Teiresias or Jocasta would raise Oedipus' spirits with the tales they had to tell!

Does the solution of this difficulty lie in using the more exact dramatic terminology of Complication and Resolution for rising and falling action respectively? Perhaps. But first let us see precisely what Aristotle⁵ meant by δέσις and λύσις:

By Complication I mean all from the beginning of the story to the point just before the change in the hero's fortunes; by Denouement, all from the beginning of the change to the end.

Clearly, then, to Aristotle, the δέσις of a tragedy was a rise in fortunes, but is it not rather obvious that during the *Tyrannus* there is no rise in the fortunes of the hero? Every advance that Oedipus makes is

toward his own doom. After the plague had broken out, the consultation of the oracle is his first step toward unwitting ruin. The Teiresias scene speeds him toward his catastrophe, though of course he does not realize it. The Creon scene is a temporary check which makes for interest and suspense and can well be compared with the sleep-walking scene in Macbeth. In a fine peripeteia,⁶ Jocasta, with the very opposite intent, hastens Oedipus on to his catastrophe with her mention of the fork in the road. The Corinthian messenger again checks the descent and even raises Oedipus' hopes momentarily with the announcement of the death of Polybus. But this only makes the final catastrophe, which is now at hand, all the more tragic. No, there is no rise in fortunes in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. But if this is true, there is no δέσις, at least in the Aristotelian sense, and the change from it to λύσις, or the real turning point of the dramatic action, is not within the play!

Such an absence would be neither impossible nor unheard of. It is not impossible, for in the beginning of the eighteenth chapter of his *Poetics*, Aristotle says,⁷

Every tragedy is in part Complication and in part Denouement; the incidents before the opening scene, and often certain also of those within the play, forming the Complication; and the rest the Denouement.

Note the expression. It is a remarkably accurate translation of the Greek and brings out the sense that the complication outside the play was more usual. Nor is this a new theory, but it is one that may have been frequently overlooked. The authors who state that in the ancient drama the audience beholds the protagonist 'not till he is in sight of his goal,'⁸ plainly hint at such a structure. E. Woodridge has clearly suggested the same fact when she says, "The *Oedipus Tyrannus* may be considered as beginning at a point corresponding to the Banquet Scene in Macbeth."⁹ And C. R. Post notes that "a Greek tragedy . . . depicts only the culmination of a disastrous series of circumstances."¹⁰ Besides, in his note on the very passage of Aristotle which we have just considered, Bywater explicitly states: "The δέσις, says Aristotle, comprises not only the presupposed part of the story, . . . but also in many instances . . . some portion of the action within the play. In the *Iph. Taur.* the δέσις extends as far as l. 391. In the *O.T.* on the other hand the entire δέσις is presupposed, the λύσις beginning with the opening scene."¹¹

There is but one final objection. Since this theory asserts that the play begins at the turning point, it differs from Aristotle's, who explicitly says that the peripeteia is reached around line 1000.¹² This objection apparently arises from the confusion of the words 'peripeteia' and 'turning point.' However, in spite of opposition from scholars like Pace, Bywater, and Butcher, both Lock and Lucas have convincingly shown that, contrary to the present-day practice of using peripeteia and turning point synonymously, to Aristotle peripeteia did not mean the turning point of a drama, but rather any effect which is the very opposite of the one intended, any boomerang of fate.¹³ Besides it is interesting to note, with Lock in the same article, that Aristotle speaks of more than one peripeteia in the *Tyrannus*. Lock adds that "this may, perhaps, press the use

of the plural unduly but as a matter of fact there are two . . . the first is to be found in 709 sqq. where Jocasta quotes the failure of the previous oracle given to Laius in order to make Oedipus distrust the oracle given to himself, but the result is that both oracles are thereby proven to be true. The second is the case quoted by Aristotle and already discussed.¹⁴ There is, then, a peripeteia in the Aristotelian sense around 1000, but this is quite obviously not the end of the δέσις, or 'rise in fortunes,' of a man who has long been speeding toward his doom. It is not, therefore, the turning point of the dramatic action of the play.

One may agree, then, with Freytag and Connell, if they mean that the turning point *within the action of the play* takes place at line 726, but it must be carefully noted that the real turning point of the dramatic action is at the very beginning of the play. A failure to realize this results in a search for such things as an 'incentive moment,' which, owing to the absence of the δέσις, is simply not there, and a more detailed analysis of the structure of the play can become such an absurdity that its graph looks more like a mountain range than a dramatic triangle.

How, then, can the structure of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* be graphically portrayed? The Freytag triangle is most useful in outlining the structure of most classical English dramas where, as in *Macbeth*, the rise and fall are included within the play. But, here, and in many other Greek dramas, its application is much more difficult. The reason is simple. Owing to the twenty-four-hour time limit on the action within the play, the Greek drama is much more brief and has a more limited scope and, as in the *Tyrannus*, frequently begins with what we term the 'turning point.' If any semblance of the Freytag triangle is to be kept, the general structure of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* may be indicated by a dotted line upward to the apex, indicating that this much of the play is assumed as already known to the spectator; and then, from the apex, or turning point, at which the play opens, a solid line downward to the catastrophe, the real scope of the ancient drama. Thus the true structure of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* may be made graphic and clear.

¹ That is, the point marking the end of the Complication and the beginning of the Denouement. Thus, accepting the Banquet Scene as the turning point of the dramatic action and using the triangle, we may graph the general structure of *Macbeth* by a line rising to the apex, representing all that precedes the Banquet Scene, and a line from the apex to the base, representing all that follows.

² *Study of Poetry*; Allyn and Bacon, Boston; 1913; p. 121.

³ *Technique of the Drama*; tr. by E. J. MacEwan; Scott, Foresman and Co., New York; Sixth Ed., 1894; p. 172.

⁴ In *King Lear*, for example, there is an emotional turning point at III.4.112, which may be called the turning point within the action of the play, but it is *not* the turning point of the dramatic action. This takes place at the beginning of the play, making the action of the play all denouement.

⁵ *Poetics*, 1455 b 26-29; Bywater's translation.

⁶ Peripeteia is "simply any event in which any agent's intention is overruled to produce an effect which is the direct opposite of that intention." Walter Lock, *Classical Review*; IX (1895); p. 251.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, 1455 b 24-26.

⁸ Dryden, *Of Dramatick Poesie*; see Butcher's *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, p. 283.

⁹ *The Drama, Its Laws and Its Technique*, Allyn and Bacon, New York; 1926; p. 75.

¹⁰ *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, "The Dramatic Art of Sophocles," XXIII (1912); p. 115.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 248, note to 18.

¹² *Poetics*, 1452 a 16-b 14.

¹³ Walter Lock, *op. cit.*, p. 251. F. L. Lucas, *Classical Review*; XXXVII (1923); p. 98.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Like Carthage or Like Athens?

The Thirtieth Anniversary Issue of *The Yale Review* (Autumn 1941) offers a stimulating paper by A. Lawrence Lowell (President of Harvard University from 1909 to 1933) on "Some Functions of Higher Education." These functions are, of course, the increasing, storing, and imparting of knowledge. Under these three heads Mr. Lowell delivers, in his own direct way, some home truths.

"I do not like the term *research*, because it sounds like working again over ground that has been searched before, as is, indeed, often the case, especially with students in the graduate schools, who, in large part, are really being taught only the use of sources and have not been selected with the expectation that they will all contribute materially to existing learning. Therefore, the terms *advancement of learning* or *increase of knowledge* seem preferable."

"Academic people commonly think of this (productive scholarship) as a matter of adequate libraries and laboratories, and these are indispensable, but not the whole of the problem. Is there not something in the atmosphere of the institution that contributes to the result?"

"All true education, at least of college grade or more, is self-education under help and guidance."

"It is of importance to a university to have a press chiefly for the publication of books of scholarly value that commercial publishers are little tempted to print. Therefore, its press cannot and should not be expected to be self-supporting. It must either be endowed or maintained out of the general revenues of the institution."

"In America education begins too late, and until the high or preparatory school proceeds too slowly, with the result that many youths have not learned to work rapidly when they enter college, and hence are not a little handicapped in the self-education they should encounter there."

"There were in the ancient world two peoples, both maritime, both conquered by the Romans; one of them has left few memorials by which we should ever know the nature of its existence; the other after the conquest dominated Rome by its culture, and through Rome the modern world. Whether we shall be more like Carthage or like Athens will depend chiefly on our universities, and the views they hold upon the dominance of the imponderables by the practical."

The Yale Review, by the way, not infrequently carries articles of great interest to classical teachers, as, for instance, "How Archaeology Aids History," by Professor M. Rostovtzeff, in the Summer Number for 1942.

It will be worth your while to read "An Open Letter to Teachers of Language" by Bayard Quincy Morgan, Managing Editor of the *Modern Language Journal*, Stanford University.

XIX

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